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Jeffrey S. Kaye: "The enemy dropped bacteria": CIA Korean War Daily Reports Affirm Allegations of U.S. Germ Warfare

Chinese[1] and North Korean allegations that the U.S. used bacterial or biological weapons (BW) during the Korean War have a long, contentious history. In 2010, some formerly top-secret CIA communications intelligence (COMINT) daily reports from the war were declassified.[2] These documents strongly support decades-old allegations that Chinese and North Korean military units were under BW attack. The CIA COMINT reports also refute purported Soviet and Chinese documents that Cold War scholars claim demonstrate the BW campaign was a Communist "hoax."

With very few exceptions, in the United States most historian[3] and journalist[4] accounts of the Korean War concur with U.S. government denials of any use of biological weapons. The ideological content of much U.S. scholarship on this question carries a one-sided tone inconsistent with a dispassionate and critical review of the known data. As will be demonstrated, such accounts also rely on a very casual and superficial reading of the historical documents used to buttress the Communist BW "hoax" hypothesis.

An anticommunist bias is evident in the writings of Katherine Weathersby and Milton Leitenberg, two scholars associated with the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) at The Wilson Center. In 1998, both scholars published essays[5] concerning the sudden appearance of a dozen documents purported to originate from Soviet archives, the bulk of which appeared to substantiate the falsity of Communist charges of U.S. use of biological weapons during the Korean War.

Weathersby and Leitenberg's essays have been cited and referenced as definitive proof of – as Leitenberg himself styled it in the title of a 2008 essay – the "false allegations" of the germ war charges.[6] Ten years earlier, Leitenberg announced in the title of another essay that the Soviet archival documents constituted a veritable

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[1] Jeffrey S. Kaye is a retired clinical psychologist and independent researcher. He is the author of *Cover-up at Guantanamo: Cover-Up at Guantanamo: The NCIS Investigation into the Suicides of Mohammed Al Hanashi and Abdul Rahman Al Amri.* He has written for *Truthout, The Guardian, AlterNet, Al Jazeera America*, and other publications.

[2] Baptism By Fire: CIA Analysis of the Korean War Overview, CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room. 2013. Archived URL at http://web.archive.org/web/20130210194919/http://www.foia.cia.gov/collection/baptism-fire-cia-analysis-korean-war-overview

[3] Thomas Powell, "Biological Warfare in Korea: A Review of the Literature," Socialism and Democracy, Vol. 33, No. 2 (September 2019), 67-107: https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2019.1644588

[4] Scott Shane, "China Inspired Interrogations at Guantánamo," *New York Times* (July 2, 2008): https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/02/us/02detain.html

[5] Milton Leitenberg, "New Russian Evidence on the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations: Background and Analysis," *CWIHP Bulletin #11*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Winter 1998), pp. 185-199; Kathryn Weathersby, "Deceiving the Deceivers: Moscow, Beijing, Pyongyang, and the Allegations of Bacteriological Weapons Use in Korea." *CWIHP Bulletin #11*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Winter 1998), 175-185: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/CWIHP_Bulletin_11.pdf

[6] Milton Leitenberg,"False Allegations of U.S. Biological Weapons Use during the Korean War." In *Terrorism, War, or Disease? Unraveling the Use of Biological Weapons. Edited by* Anne L. Clunan, Peter R. Lavoy, and Susan B. Martin. Stanford University Press, May 2008: https://cissm.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2019-07/leitenberg_biological_weapons_korea.pdf

"Resolution of the Korean War Biological Warfare Charges."[7]

With only a few exceptions noted below, over the years the Soviet documents and the CWIHP scholars' analyses of these documents were not critically examined. Yet as this essay will show, the CWIHP documents are riddled with historical inaccuracies and are internally inconsistent. Their reliability and validity as documents recording acts of deception concerning the BW charges from North Korean and China are astoundingly poor. It is time for a thorough review of this issue in the light of new documentary evidence.

This essay will examine the CIA's COMINT documents themselves, in addition to providing an in-depth look at the Soviet and Chinese documents that have for over two decades been considered authoritative evidence that the charges of U.S. germ warfare during the Korean War were only anti-U.S. propaganda. Besides the assumed Soviet archival material, these "hoax" documents include a purported brief memoir by Wu Zhili, a Chinese military doctor who claimed the BW charges were a "false alarm."[8] Both the Soviet and Wu documents describe the creation of counterfeit sites of infection that allegedly were organized to fool inspection teams from the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) and the 1952 International Scientific Commission for the Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China (ISC), headed by British scientist Joseph Needham.

With the perspective of hindsight, one can speculate that the varied "hoax" documents, and other attempts to debunk the BW charges, including the analytic comments by CIA COMINT analysts looking at the reports of Communist military units under attack, were, when they were not outright attempts to deceive by the U.S. government or its allies, classic examples of confirmation bias. An issue of possibly of greater importance concerns extensive government censorship of the documentary record and the disappearance or relative unavailability of key primary documents. Accordingly, the issue arises as to how much accepted history, and therefore of what we know about our world and our culture, has been seriously distorted by government secrecy.

The COMINT Documents and Germ Warfare

In 2010, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency declassified hundreds of previously top-secret communications intelligence daily reports from the Korean War. In February 2013, the CIA posted these reports at its online reading library under the title, "Baptism By Fire: CIA Analysis of the Korean War Overview" (see footnote 2). Besides the COMINT Daily Reports from the years 1951-53, the CIA release included various intelligence memos, national intelligence estimates, transcripts, Presidential memos, and open-source reports from the Agency's Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).

In September 2020, this author posted a 152-page subset of the COMINT Daily Reports in PDF format,[9] at DocumentCloud.org and Medium.com, along with an initial description of the relevant documents.[10] In all, there were 28 COMINT reports, and a handful of other CIA-originated documents, which concerned

[7] Milton Leitenberg, "Resolution of the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations," *Critical Reviews in Microbiology,* Volume 24, No. 3 (Fall 1998), 169–194.
[8] Milton Leitenberg*, China's False Allegations of the Use of Biological Weapons by the United States during the Korean War,* CWIHP Working Paper #78. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (March 2016): https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/chinas-false-allegations-the-use-biological-weapons-the-united-states-during-the-korean

[9] "BW Comint Baptism Files." DocumentCloud.org (originally published at CIA FOIA Reading Room). Edited by Jeffrey S. Kaye. 2020: https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/24361794/bw-comint-baptism-files.pdf [Hereafter in footnotes, "Comint files.")
[10] Jeffrey S. Kaye. "A real flood of bacteria and germs" — Communications Intelligence and Charges of U.S. Germ Warfare during the Korean War, *Medium.com* (September 16, 2020): https://jeff-kaye.medium.com/a-real-flood-of-bacteria-and-germs-communications-intelligence-and-charges-of-u-s-4decafdc762

contemporaneous accounts of intercepted and deciphered communications between various Chinese and North Korean military units and their commands or constituent battalions concerning their response to BW attack. Since the CIA curated this list, it seems highly likely that there is much more on this subject that has not been publicly released. For instance, one document speaks of many "enemy" reports concerned with "incidence of disease" from BW attacks (see material associated with footnote 24 below). But extant COMINT reports mentioning such occurrences are few.

The relevant COMINT documents used for this article were all drawn from the year 1952, which was the year that China and North Korea alleged the U.S. began a large-scale air campaign utilizing biological weaponry of various sorts. None of the COMINT documents from 1951 available through the CIA release mention germ warfare, though some of the analytical reports in the Baptism collection did summarize and comment upon North Korean charges of U.S. BW use early in the war (1950-1951).

Additionally, none of the 1953 COMINT documents available mentioned BW either, even though we know from press accounts and other intelligence documents that such attacks continued into 1953 up until the armistice was signed. In fact, the newly released CIA documentation, in concert with forgotten press accounts, belie the claim in Weathersby and Leitenberg's "hoax" and "false alarm" documents to the effect that Communist charges of germ warfare ceased in early 1953. In fact, this was a claim that could never be upheld, and whose intent possibly was to bury in historical consciousness a major release in late 1953 of U.S. air crew confessions related to the use of germ warfare.[11]

A synopsis of the 1952 COMINT daily reports

What follows is a short précis of each of the relevant 1952 COMINT daily reports. The information in these reports, which were highly classified, was drawn from intercepts decrypted and then translated by technicians and linguists working for the Armed Forces Security Agency, the predecessor of today's National Security Agency, and U.S. Air Force intelligence assets. From 1951-1953, Korean War COMINT documents carried the markings "SUEDE" or "CANOE." Among COMINT producers and customers, these documents were considered "Special Intelligence," so secret and restricted even their code words were classified.[12]

Each document below is referenced right after the date by the original "Daily Reports" file name by which the CIA posted it online.[13] The documents are listed chronologically *not* by date of COMINT report, but by the date of the original communications intercept, as cited in the reports, allowing us to better follow the unfolding BW experience in North Korean and Chinese military units. The page numbers in the footnotes refer to the document I posted online, which contained only those "Baptism by Fire" documents that referred to the biological weapons reports.[14]

The first relevant document was a February 19 report (1952-02-19a.pdf): "North Korean coastal unit reports UN bacteriological warfare: 'The spies are putting poison into the drinking water' and are distributing 'paper' that causes death to anyone 'using those papers for the nose,' a battalion of the 7th Railroad Security Regiment

[11] "Depositions of Nineteen Captured U.S. Airmen on Their Participation in Germ Warfare in Korea." *People's China*, Supplement (December 1, 1953), 1-68: https://www.massline.org/PeoplesChina/PC1953/PC1953-23-Sup-OCR-sm.pdf

[12] David Easter. "Code Words, Euphemisms and What They Can Tell Us About Cold War Anglo-American Communications Intelligence." *Intelligence and National Security,* Vol. 27, No. 6 (July 18. 2012), 876-877, https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2012.699288.

[13] Each of these original files can be accessed at an archived website: http://web.archive.org/web/20130210194919/http://www.foia.cia.gov/collection/baptism-fire-cia-analysis-korean-war-overview

[14] See footnote 9.

reported on 16 February."[15] (All underlined words are throughout as in the original documents. The dates are also recorded as they appear in the original file. The quoted material in single quotes is from the raw communications intercept material, subsequent to its decryption and translation by employees of the AFSA, or other translating service.)

A March 6 report (1952-03-06a.pdf) stated, "Chinese unit in Korea reports UN bacteria drop: An unidentified Chinese Communist unit on 26 February reported that 'yesterday it was discovered that in our bivouac area there was a real flood of bacteria and germs from a plane by the enemy. Please supply us immediately with an issue of DDT that we may combat this menace, stop the spread of this plague, and eliminate all bacteria.'"[16]

From a March 9 report (1952-03-09.pdf): "A Chinese Communist artillery unit was informed on 29 February that 'all personnel be reinoculated at once' with bubonic plague vaccine. Healthy individuals, however, are to take only a half-strength shot or may 'temporarily not be inoculated.'"[17]

> "Another message from a Chinese Communist artillery regiment reported on 27 February that 'we have now fully obtained the vaccine required for smallpox in the spring time, malaria, and bubonic plague.' The sender notes that the smallpox and malaria shots have already been given, but queries, 'How shall we administer the bubonic plague shots?'"[18]

Earlier, a February 29 report (1952-2-29a.pdf) stated: "North Koreans order precautions against alleged bacteriological warfare: A North Korean battalion commander was ordered on 27 February to take special precautions to avoid contamination of his unit's food and water because 'the enemy dropped bacteria' in central Korea. Covering wells and disinfecting United Nations leaflets were additional recommendations."[19]

A March 3 report (1952-03-04b.pdf) read: "The seriousness with which the enemy is treating the charges of BW is evident in a series of 28 and 29 February North Korean messages which contained such instructions as 'the contaminated area must be covered with snow and spray… do not go near the actual place' and which ordered that 'injections with number nine (unidentified) vaccine will be made.' Another message stated that 'the surgical institute members left here to investigate the bacteria bombs dropped on the 29th.'"[20]

A March 11 top secret report (1952-03-11a.pdf), commenting upon the ongoing BW charges, stated: "Another manifestation of the theme is a 1 March query from Pyongyang to a North Korean air unit at Sariwon, in the supposedly contaminated area, 'Have you not had any victims as a result of certain bacteria weapons?'"[21]

From a March 7 report (1952-03-07a.pdf): "No sickness from BW reported in North Korean coastal unit: A North Korean unit on coastal security in eastern Korea reported to Naval Defense Headquarters near Wonsan on 2 March that although on the 28th insects were again dropped at Paekyang, Sinpung, and Innam, 'no one has been infected yet.'"[22]

From the same March 7 report: "North Korean east coast unit claims BW caused hardships: A North Korean coastal security unit in eastern Korea reported on 3 March that UN bacteriological warfare agents in the surrounding area had prevented the movement of transportation since 21 February. Later in the day the unit reported to Pyongyang that 'Pupyong (just southwest of Hamhung)… is the contaminated area. According to the correct news, no one can pass through it. If

[15] Comint files, 12.
[16] Ibid., 20-21.
[17] Ibid., 28.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 14.
[20] Ibid., 18.
[21] Ibid., 27.
[22] Ibid., 25.

you do not act quickly, the 12th and 13th guard stations will have fallen into starvation conditions.'"[23]

A March 11 COMINT report (1952-03-11a.pdf) stated, "BW scare continues to occupy Communists in Korea: A long detailed 6 March message from the North Korean 23rd Brigade to one of its subordinate battalions suggested preventive measures to be used against bacteria allegedly dropped by UN aircraft. The report stated that "three persons. . . became suddenly feverish and their nervous system have benumbed." After treatment, "two persons alive and one dead." The report concluded with the statement, "the government will soon take pictures of specific appearance of the germs collectively and correct photographic data will be provided."[24]

Another COMINT report, dated March 14 (1952-03-14a.pdf), referenced a different incident also on March 6. A "Chinese Communist message" indicated that one of the soldiers from the 345th regiment had "picked up a UN propaganda leaflet and 'was immediately poisoned.'" The message said the soldier was "administered 'fever medicine, the fever abated and he is now recovered.'" All other units were warned not to handle any leaflets.[25]

An interesting March 17 COMINT report (1952-03-17a.pdf) entitled one section of its write up, "Campaign against BW continues unabated in North Korea." The section began, "A considerable portion of Chinese and Korean communications still are concerned with reports of BW, with preventive measures, and with incidence of disease."

The same report continued, "Two coastal security stations in northeastern Korea reported on 11 March that 'the bacteria bomb classified as mosquito, fly, and flea [sic] were dispersed," also "an enemy plane dropped ants, fleas, mosquitos, flies and crickets.'"

The report went on: "A Chinese Communist unit commander in western Korea demonstrates his conviction that BW is being employed against him in his order to a subordinate unit who captured some UN soldiers. The subordinate unit is instructed to ask the prisoners what 'type of immunization shots were administered recently'…."

The CIA report also stated, "Two 12 March North Korean naval messages to units in Songjin and Chongjin, cities in coastal northeastern Korea, ordered the units to cooperate with city officials to 'have a counterplan' for the BW attacks, 'which includes injections, vaccinations and rat poison' and in order 'to prevent an epidemic the rats. . . must be hunted.'"[26]

The same report concluded by referencing two North Korean messages discussing deaths due to cholera in northeastern Korea. It's not clear from this report if these specific deaths are supposedly due to BW attack, but that seems to be the inference.[27]

A March 20 report (1952-03-20.pdf) described "a Communist Chinese message" that reported fatalities. According to a top-secret CIA daily report, headed "Communists continue organizing to meet threat of BW," an intercepted March 15 message discussed how "a certain unit discovered a large concentration of plague germs. Many people have been afflicted with this undiagnosed disease and already several persons have succumbed with the illness."[28] The confusion between knowledge of "plague germs" and the "undiagnosed" nature of the disease is not explained.

The same report also described a March 17 North Korean message that "detailed preventive steps to be taken by subordinate units 'to prevent various diseases which may intrude into here by the new weapons used by the enemy.'" Such measures included additional hospital facilities, "stricter hygienic discipline, isolation of infected units, high priority reporting of the outbreak of disease, and strict observation of 'enemy aircraft… of bacterial bombs'" (ellipses in original).[29]

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 27.
[25] Ibid., 35.
[26] Ibid., 37.
[27] Ibid., 38.
[28] Ibid., 41.
[29] Ibid., 41

Differing from previous reports, a March 27 CIA daily report (1952-03-27.pdf) detailed an incident that was refuted by North Korean authorities. The intercept was made by the 15th Radio Squadron Mobile (RSM), which was a U.S. Air Force cryptographic unit.[30] The raw intelligence was then passed to the 501st Communications Reconnaissance Group, Korea, whose job, according to one history of the unit, was to "direct operations of ASA support units in the Korean Theater, coordinating all ASA [Army Security Agency, often identified as the Armed Forces Security Agency] activities at each of the lower echelons."[31]

On March 25, there were messages from a North Korean battalion in the Hamhung area that a civilian police officer had discovered an American "bacteria bomb." The policeman believed this based on "the coincidence of a UN bombing attack and the appearance of 'flies' in the area." But a "North Korean military sanitation officer, sent to affirm this incident, reported that the policeman's report was false and that the flies 'were not caused from bacterial weapon but from the fertilizers on the place.'"[32]

The importance of the debunked report is that CIA and U.S. Army communications intelligence personnel were aware that North Korean officials were concerned with validating BW attacks, and, from this example, also appear committed to dismissing reports that fail to meet evidentiary standards.

Meanwhile, other reports of BW attacks were being reported. According to a March 21 COMINT report (1952-03-21a.pdf), "a North Korean message, probably from the 23rd Brigade in western Korea, reports the alleged dropping of bacteria in the area occupied by the '18th Regiment, 4th Division.'"[33]

Another CIA report, dated April 4 (1952-04-02.pdf), indicated that some inoculations against bacteria dropped by the enemy had failed to take place. As a result, "a 'grave situation' has developed because 'the friendly troops (probably North Koreans) have developed (some sort of disease?).'" [Parentheses in original][34]

Elsewhere in the same report, communications intelligence intercepts detailed, "Enemy units still reporting BW agents in Korea: An unidentified North Korean regiment notified its battalions on 30 March that 'the enemy is actively dropping bacterial weapons in general now.' All units were to report promptly UN biological warfare attacks."[35]

A May 9 COMINT account (1952-05-09b.pdf) briefly discussed another U.S. BW attack: on 5 May a "North Korean unit" reported how, "on the second of May, at night," U.S. planes "dropped bacteria weapons at Chongpyong."

The narrative, with the subhead "Communist units renew charges of BW attacks in North Korea, described another U.S. BW attack: "'They dropped spiders and ants over Songjin city… today,' a North Korean coastal security station in northeastern Korea reported on 6 May. The message continues that the alleged drop area has been isolated and is being investigated by 'the plague prevention work committee.'"[36]

Very little about BW is documented from the COMINT reports, such as we have them, over the next five weeks. But a July10 top-secret "CANOE" report (1952-07-10a.pdf) describes a very interesting "Soviet ground control intercept net in north-western Korea," which "on 16 May passed a message over its administrative link."[37] The report concerned the capture of "Makurin," who also had evidently been interrogated already. The

[30] Entry 9807, June 26, 2000, and Entry 21640, December 19, 2001, "Air Force Security Service (USAFSS) – 6," *Korean War Project*, https://www.korean-war.org/html/units/usaf/usafss.htm?PageNum_Looking=6

[31] "501st Communications Reconnaissance Group: A Brief History," no date, https://nasaa-home.org/1Site_Map/Web-Sites-ASA-INSCOM/Z-korea-not-listed/his501st.htm

[32] Comint files, 44.

[33] Ibid., 43.

[34] Ibid., 64.

[35] Ibid., 64.

[36] Ibid., 96.

[37] Ibid., 129.

CIA believed the interrogation may have been attended by "Soviet Lieutenant General of Aviation, Vladmir Razuvaev… the Soviet Ambassador to North Korea," who CIA believed was possibly also "the over-all commander of Soviet aircraft participating in the Korean air war."[38]

The July 10 memo speculates, probably accurately, that "Makurin" was in fact Colonel Walker M. Mahurin, who had been working in the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force at the start of the Korean War. He was also the author of a particularly damning set of confessions to the Chinese, detailing the origins and implementation of the U.S. BW program.[39] He was commander of the 4th Fighter Group, USAF, when he was shot down on 13 May 1952. The COMINT memo on "Makurin" then would be the only such released U.S. government document to reference contemporaneously the capture of an officer who would later "confess" to use of biological weapons.

The CIA analyst writing the July 10 memo stated, "The suggested presence of… Razuvaev, at the interrogation of Colonel Mahurin is another indication of the Soviet Union's intense interest in the military aspects of the Korean war."[40] But the memo itself implies Mahrurin also was of special interest to the CIA.

According to Mahurin's "deposition" to Chinese interrogators, he had visited Ft. Detrick in November 1950 in order to become better acquainted with the biological warfare research being conducted there. In his autobiography, *Honest John*, written after the Korean War,[41] Mahurin never denied his visit to Ft. Detrick, though he did deny U.S. use of germ weapons. The book details his friendships with a number of high-ranking military officers and CIA officials.

Both Mahurin's confession, released to the world in November 1953, and the role of Razuvaev take on significance in the context of the Weathersby/Leitenberg Soviet documents used to dismiss Communist charges of germ warfare, as discussed further below.

On June 17, a COMINT top-secret report (1952-06-17a.pdf) described a communication from an "unidentified Chinese Communist artillery regiment," which on June 6 "informed its subordinate elements that 'an investigating committee . . . is coming to Korea to investigate the releasing of germs and insects by enemy planes and artillery. Request that men be found who can verify the releasing of germs . . .'"[42]

The investigating committee was very likely the International Scientific Commission, led by British scientist Joseph Needham.

During this period there was a CIA daily report that referred to a specific chemical attack consistent with the tactics of Japan's Unit 731, and so is included here. The report was dated July 27, 1952 (1952-07-24a.pdf). It described an "attempted poisoning of North Korean troops": "The commander of an artillery battalion, possibly subordinate to the 8th North Korean Division, informed his superior on 20 July that 'in the troop area arsenic was put into the well.' There was no 'damage,' but the commander stated that a search for the culprits was under way."[43]

An August 21 top-secret "CANOE" report (1952-08-21.pdf) read, "North Koreans expect use of BW by United Nations: On 17 August the North Korean 21st Brigade notified a battalion commander of a Chinese Communist intelligence report that on 13 August the US Army shipped 'creatures for experiment' from a Seoul suburb to Taegu.

"On the same day, the Chinese report continued, another American Army unit transported five tons of 'experimental material,' probably dead rats, from Taegu to an unspecified air base. The sender cautions that all units should be on the

[38] Ibid., 129.
[39] Jeffrey S. Kaye, "Secret History: U.S. Air Force, Marine Corps Flyers' Confessions on Use of Biological Weapons in the Korean War," *Medium.com* (August 31, 2021): https://medium.com/@jeff-kaye/secret-history-u-s-2ac4c7219bd
[40] Comint files, 129.
[41] Walker Mahurin. *Honest John: The Autobiography of Walker M. Mahurin*. Pickle Partners Publishing, 2016. Originally published G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962.
[42] Comint files, 110.
[43] Ibid., 131.

watch for the 'anticipated' enemy use of bacteriological warfare."[44]

There is a few months gap in the CIA COMINT documents until a December 9 report (1952-12-09.pdf) that detailed two relevant BW messages: "The first message, on 29 November, was a report of 'insects' that appeared on 20 November, and which have been positively identified as being unusual." The sender added that there had been "no cases of illness" and that preventive measures were being taken.

The report continued: "A second message, on 6 December, located 'quantities of insects that carry bacteria' in the North Korean sector of front lines and attributed their spread to the 'barbarous United States empire.' Preventive measures against smallpox and typhus, both endemic in North Korea, were stressed in the message."[45]

The 9 December COMINT Daily Report was the last to specifically mention BW attack released by the CIA in their Baptism by Fire collection.

Summarizing the COMINT reports

In conclusion, the CIA's release of COMINT documents from the Korean War show both North Korean and Chinese authorities scrambling to understand the full implications of what appeared to be attack by bacterial weapons on military units of the Korean People's Army (KPA) and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army forces. Even in the abbreviated release of such documents by the CIA, there is evidence of disease from such attacks (particularly from cholera and bubonic plague), some deaths, attempts to distribute both insecticide compounds and vaccinations to meet defensive needs, and medical evaluation of the validity of field reports and dismissal of false alarms. There are multiple descriptions of attack by poison, by insect and animal vectors, by contaminated feathers, as well as less specific descriptions of bacterial "drops" by U.S. military aircraft. In their totality, these documents provide a consistent and believable account of a biological weapons campaign of unknown size occurring during the chaos of a total war scenario.

Moreover, the instances of germ war attack described by these documents are consistent with the evidentiary accounts provided in the ISC report of September 1952, and the earlier IADL reports of March and May 1952. The reports described in the COMINT records also are consistent with the findings of Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, who examined Chinese archival material and interviewed Chinese scientists as well. The archival materials these researchers examined clearly showed evidence of BW attack, and documented the difficulty Chinese authorities encountered and how they tried to deal with it. Maps were drawn showing regions "Where American Military Forces Spread Bacteria in 1952."[46]

If this were fraud, why would China and North Korea go to such extremes as falsifying reports in their contemporaneous communications and materials? So it could show up in archives decades later? The answer is clear. The U.S. biological warfare campaign in North Korea and China was real, and efforts to discredit that truth are themselves discredited.

The Leitenberg/Weathersby Soviet "Hoax" Documents

In 1998, the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) at The Wilson Center published twelve purported Soviet documents that claimed to describe the construction of false sites of bacteriological infection as part of a campaign to deceive international investigators looking into the germ warfare charges.

The documents and the articles published along with them made headlines in 1998. A typical news story from an Associated Press article at the time pronounced, "Stories About Germ

[44] Ibid., 133.
[45] Ibid., 140.
[46] Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman. *The United States and Biological Warfare: Secrets from the Early Cold War and Korea*. Indiana University Press, 1998, 1-26 (quote is on pg. 17).

Warfare in Korea False."[47] These documents are central to current claims of a Communist germ warfare "hoax." The references to these documents are so numerous that it is not necessary to document them. Such references are in the dozens, if not hundreds. Important works, such as Simon Winchester's 2009 biography of Joseph Needham, have relied on the CWIHP Soviet documents to contend that North Korean and Chinese evidence of the U.S. germ warfare campaign was "*created artificially* by, or with the help of, intelligence agents from the Soviet Union" (italics in original).[48]

Recently, in 2022, the CWHIP documents were cited by U.S. Army historian Conrad C. Crane, writing for the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College. Crane wrote, "revelations from Russian archives… strongly support the argument, however, that mid-level Chinese and Russian operatives cooperating with the North Korean government had faked evidence."[49]

The 1998 documents allegedly came from from Russia's Presidential Archive, though only transcripts of the documents were published by a "far-right"[50] Japanese newspaper, *Sankei Shimbun*, and then translated by "independent researcher" Kathryn Weathersby.[51] The documents, received somehow from Japanese journalist sources, not from the archive itself, were apparently also published or distributed by the CIA's FBIS.

"Senior Research Fellow at Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland," Milton Leitenberg, whose writings on the Korean War BW controversy extended back to 1971, simultaneously published an analysis of the documents in the same CWIHP Bulletin as Weathersby.[52] Despite the fact that The Wilson Center received a significant part of its budget from the U.S. government,[53] no notice of potential conflict of interest by the authors or publishers accompanied the publication of these documents or their analyses.

Although Milton Leitenberg subsequently released additional documents said to come from Chinese archives, which included some Soviet documents from the Korean War period,[54] nothing in this later release substantially added to the

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[47] Mike Feinsilber, "Stories about germ warfare in Korea false." *The Akron Beacon Journal* (November 17, 1998), A9. https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-akron-beacon-journal-associated-pres/64559648/

[48] Simon Winchester, *The Man Who Loved China: The Fantastic Story of the Eccentric Scientist Who Unlocked the Mysteries of the Middle Kingdom*. HarperCollins. 2009, 212.

[49] Crane, Conrad C. "Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations Against the United States: A Playbook for the Current Crisis in Ukraine." *Articles & Editorials*, USAWC Press (March 2022), 4.

[50] Jake Adelstein, "Japan May Be Moving Right Politically, But Its Communist Party Still Holds Some Sway With Voters." *Forbes* (October 30, 2017): https://www.forbes.com/sites/adelstein-jake/2017/10/30/japan-may-be-moving-right-politically-but-its-communist-party-still-holds-some-sway-with-voters/?sh=7c3544177dfc

[51] Kathryn Weathersby, "Deceiving the Deceivers: Moscow, Beijing, Pyongyang, and the Allegations of Bacteriological Weapons Use in Korea," *CWIHP Bulletin #11*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Winter 1998): 176-185. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/CWIHP_Bulletin_11.pdf

[52] Milton Leitenberg, "New Russian Evidence on the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations: Background and Analysis," *CWIHP Bulletin #11*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Winter 1998): https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/CWIHP_Bulletin_11.pdf

[53] According to an Internet archived record of the Wilson Center website, dated 16 August 2000, "The Center is a public-private partnership. Slightly less than half the Center's operating funds come annually from an appropriation from the U.S. government, and the Center's building, a wing of the Ronald Reagan Building, was provided by the U.S. government." Anonymous. "About the Center." *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars* (August 16, 2000): http://web.archive.org/web/20000816134534/http://wwics.si.edu/ATC/about.htm

[54] Milton Leitenberg*, China's False Allegations of the Use of Biological Weapons by the United States during the Korean War, CWIHP Working Paper #78*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (March 2016):.

charges and claims made as a result of the 1998 documents.[55]

The 1998 Soviet archival documents were widely accepted by the academic community, which is surprising, as the evidence they present cannot withstand close textual analysis. Critical analyses of these documents are few and far between (see Endicott and Hagerman[56]; Chaddock[57]; and Powell[58]). The primary, unanalyzed problem lies with the documents' contradictory timeline for central events. The addition of the CIA COMINT documents also adds to the issues concerning the validity of the documents' historical account.

For the purposes of this essay, I do not rely on questions concerning the provenance of these documents. They may have come from Soviet archives, or they may be forgeries. But as presented, textually, the documents are unreliable as historical evidence, and certainly do not represent what Milton Leitenberg claimed, i.e., that the BW charges were "a grand piece of political theater."[59] Yet, because these documents are at the heart of Weathersby and Leitenberg's contention regarding the falseness of China and North Korea's claims of U.S. attack by bacteriological weapons, we must examine them in some depth.

When Kathryn Weathersby introduced the twelve Soviet documents in her 1998 essay, "Deceiving the Deceivers: Moscow, Beijing, Pyongyang, and the Allegations of Bacteriological Weapons Use in Korea," she said, "The specifics of persons, dates and events are consistent with evidence available from a wide array of other sources…. their contents are so complex and interwoven that it would have been extremely difficult to forge them. In short, the sources are credible."[60] Yet, as we shall see, she failed to even accurately describe the documents.

The key assertion behind Weathersby and Leitenberg's BW "hoax" scenario concerned a memorandum purportedly sent by Glukhov and Smirnov, two Soviet advisers to the North Korean regime, to top Soviet official Semyon Ignatiev concerning alleged Soviet participation in creating with the North Koreans faked evidence of biological warfare attacks by the Americans. (Glukhov and Smirnov's first names are not provided in the extant documents.)

According to Weathersby, in 1952 Glukhov was an adviser to the Ministry of State Security in the DPRK, while Smirnov was adviser to the DPRK's Ministry of Internal Affairs. S. Ignatiev, as Minister of State Security, held high office in the Soviet Union at the time, and was a member of the Communist Party Central Committee.

The Glukhov/Smirnov memo to Ignatiev regarding the deception surrounding charges of U.S. germ warfare has never been found or published. Its purported existence was first described in Document #5 of the Weathersby documents, which was an April 21, 1953 memorandum from then-Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Lavrenti Beria, to Georgy M. Malenkov and the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Malenkov had just recently succeeded Stalin as Premier of the Soviet Union after the latter's death in early March.

Canadian scholars Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman[61] have contended that a number of the Soviet documents relating to Glukhov and Smirnov's purported memo to Ignatiev, who was a competitor to Beria in the succession struggle immediately after Stalin's death, were concocted

https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/chinas-false-allegations-the-use-biological-weapons-the-united-states-during-the-korean

[55] Thomas Powell. "On the Biological Warfare "Hoax" Thesis', *Socialism and Democracy,* Vol. 32, No. 1 (April 2018), 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2018.1441118

[56] Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman. 'Twelve Newly Released Soviet-era "Documents" and Allegations of U.S. Germ Warfare During the Korean War,' *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2001. 249-257. https://www.jstor.org/stable/42704306

[57] David Chaddock. *This Must Be the Place: How the U.S. Waged Germ Warfare in the Korean War and Denied It Ever Since*. Bennett & Hastings Publishing, 2013.

[58] Powell, op. cit.

[59] Leitenberg, op. cit., 2.

[60] Weathersby, op. cit., 176.

[61] Endicott and Hagerman, 2001. Passim.

in an attempt to frame Ignatiev and remove him from Beria's path to power. This scenario seems reasonable, and helps us understand the poor evidentiary value of the documents, as well as the fact that before the year 1953 was concluded, Beria would be arrested, tried and executed for treason.

Beria charged that Ignatiev had withheld from Soviet authorities the Glukhov/Smirnov memorandum, with its supposedly damning details about the creation of false evidence of biological attack. Glukov and Smirnov allegedly accused the Soviet ambassador to the DPRK, Lt. Gen. V.N. Razuvaev, of acting in concert with North Korean authorities in simulating "two false regions of infection... for the purpose of accusing the Americans of using bacteriological weapons in Korea and China."[62]

The details of the plan to falsify sites of BW attack were lurid. They included manufacturing false evidence of bacterial infection. Beria described how "[t]wo Koreans who had been sentenced to death and were being held in a hut were infected. One of them was later poisoned." The implication was that the bacterial evidence came from these two deliberately infected Korean prisoners.

Beria claimed that roughly a year after the memo purportedly was sent to Ignatiev, he had found it "in the archive of the MGB USSR" after, Beria vaguely recalled, "receiving the matter at the beginning of April 1953."[63]

Beria apparently then approached Glukhov and Razuvaev, as well as a Lt. Selivanov, a student in the Kirov Army Medical Academy who had been an adviser to the Military-Medical Department of the KPA, and had them all write letters in mid-April 1953 describing their part in the deception. Why Beria needed testimony about the plot to falsify BW attack from Glukhov and Razuvaev, when he presumably had the original Glukhov/Smirnov report at hand, has never been explained.

As regards to the timeline presented in his April 21, 1953 memo, Beria reported that Ignatiev had received the Glukhov/Smirnov report in early March 1952, *prior* to the entry into North Korea of investigators from the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), who had come to North Korea to investigate the germ warfare charges, as well as reports of other atrocities. The IADL representatives were in North Korea from March 3 to March 19, after which they traveled to China for a few weeks to look into BW reports from that country.

But in a surprising switch of the timeline, published in the Soviet documents without any comment by either Kathryn Weathersby or Milton Leitenberg, subsequent Soviet documents referenced in their 1998 articles reference *a different date* for Ignatiev's receipt of the Glukhov/Smirnov report, moving the latter from early March 1952 to early April 1952, a month later than Beria originally reported. Both dates, early March or in April, present difficulties for those who would claim these documents as genuine.

Critiquing the timelines

Documenting the switch in the timeline over the course of varying documents is tedious to describe, and for many readers, keeping track of the characters involved may seem as daunting as that of a Dostoyevsky novel. But the analysis of the timelines provided is crucial to assessing the reliability, or rather, unreliability of the alleged Soviet archival documents.

If we look at the timeline of the BW events in Korea, we can see the problem with maintaining an early March date for the appearance of the report. Briefly, in their March 1952 report, the IADL dated the first documented BW insect vector attack they investigated as January 28, 1952.[64] On February 22, DPRK Foreign Minister Bak

[62] Weathersby, op. cit., 182.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. *Report on U.S. Crimes in Korea* (March 31, 1952), 5. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/606938/files/S_2684_Add.1-EN.pdf

Hun-Yung went public with charges of alleged U.S. BW attacks.[65]

According to Weathersby's Document #4, on April 18, 1953 Razuvaev wrote an "explanatory note" to Lavrenti P. Beria, Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. In this April 18 "note," Razuvaev claimed he was approached by North Korean leader Kim Il Sung and Bak Hun-Yung after a meeting with them over a year earlier on February 27, 1952, five days before the arrival of the IADL investigators on March 3. Razuvaev said the North Koreans were concerned that "an international delegation was coming."[66]

Left unsaid was that the delegation's purpose was already known: the investigators were coming to look at the evidence for germ warfare and other atrocities. Since there supposedly was no evidence of germ warfare, Kim and Bak allegedly asked Razuvaev what they should do in this situation. This was already five days after North Korea's Bak had publicly claimed and documented twelve specific U.S. BW attacks (over Yonsodong and Yongsudong, over Inchon, as well as in the Chorwon, Sibyonni, Pyonggang, Kumhwa, Hongsu, Ochonni, and Shankapri and Hakkapri areas).[67]

Razuvaev's "note" describes how in a matter of a few days a plan was worked out involving the DPRK Ministry of Health. Here is what Razuvaev then (allegedly) wrote:

> False plague regions were created, burials of bodies of those who died and their disclosure were organized, measures were taken to receive the plague and cholera bacillus. The adviser of MVD [Ministry of Internal Affairs] DPRK proposed to infect with the cholera and plague bacilli persons sentenced to execution, in order to prepare the corresponding [pharmaceutical] preparations after their death. Before the arrival of the delegation of jurists, materials were sent to Beijing for exhibit (brackets in original text).[68]

This hasty conspiracy makes little sense, and it doesn't fit known facts. For example, the Beijing exhibit of materials on the U.S. bacteriological weapons attack opened on May 2, 1952, a full month after the IADL delegation left China.[69] Assuming he even wrote the memo involved, Razuvaev must have known his testimony was factually incorrect. He may have testified as he did in fear for his life before the bureaucrat Beria, or he deliberately presented a nonsensical scenario in a way that could exculpate himself later, or at least signal others that his "confession" was false. We may never know.

Then, too, could a conspiracy really be put forth between February 27 and March 3, that would be robust enough to include the more than one hundred witnesses interviewed by the skilled attorneys and judges of the IADL? Could prisoners really be infected with cholera or plague, and then executed in time to produce bacteriological evidence post-mortem of the diseases, all within three to five days? Furthermore, since it seems likely the North Koreans had known the IADL had organized a delegation as far back as September 1951, when the intent to conduct such an investigation was first approved by IADL authorities, why would North Korea's leaders wait until the IADL was about to arrive to approach Soviet advisers for assistance?

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[65] For full text of Bak's speech, see Jeffrey S. Kaye, "Massive Mail Censorship Program Hid North Korea Accusations of U.S. BW, Collaboration with Unit 731 War Criminals." *Medium.com* (January 5, 2021): https://medium.com/@jeff-kaye/censored-north-korea-accused-u-s-of-working-with-unit-731-war-criminals-on-bw-attacks-d7fd819ed8b7

[66] Weathersby, op. cit., 181.

[67] Kaye, op. cit.

[68] Ibid.

[69] "Exhibition on Bacteriological War Crimes Committed by the Government of the United States of America." The Chinese People's Committee for World Peace. 1952, 2. (This report is unpublished in the United States and is held by the author.)

In addition, this brief five-day time period was supposed to include the writing of the report on the false BW sites sent by Glukhov and Smirnov to Ignatiev *before* March 3. Interestingly, the "explanatory note," from "Lieutenant of the Medical Service Selivanov," to Beria (Weathersby Document #3)[70] appears to support Razuvaev's early March timeline for the Glukhov/Smirnov memo.

Before the arrival in Korea of the delegation of jurists [which we know was on March 3, per the IADL's own report - JK], the North Korean representatives were seriously worried that they had not succeeded in creating sites of infection and constantly asked the advisers at MID [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], the Ministry of Health and the Military-Medical Administration of the KPA—advisers Smirnov, Malov and myself—what to do in such a situation.[71]

There is another oddity about the Selivanov "note" worth mentioning. He states that in March 1952 he told Sergei Shtemenko, Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces, following "the inquiry from the General Staff of the SA [Soviet Army], that there are not and have not been instances of plague or cholera in the PRC, there are no examples of bacteriological weapons, [and] if any are discovered they will be immediately sent to Moscow."[72]

But Selivanov, who was a minor official at best, was stationed in North Korea, and was not well-placed to report on potential germ warfare attacks in China. The entire note, like the others Beria gathered, read like a put-up job, and often make no logical sense.

When considering the alleged Soviet archival descriptions of the BW "hoax," there is also the fact that the IADL looked at more than two sites of purported BW attack. Overall, according to their own report, the IADL examined sites in four different provinces and more than nine towns, including "Pyongyang, Nampo, Kaichen, Pek Dong, Anju, Anak, Sinchon, Sariwon, Wonsan etc."[73] The Beria documents only describe the falsification of two sites.

In their Korea report, the IADL highlighted 15 different "typical cases" of insect drops, as identified by "observation posts of the Korean People's Army, the Chinese People's Volunteers and the Local Anti-aircraft Detachments," while "different kinds of insects were found in 169 areas of North Korea." The investigators concluded, "The examinations confirmed the local reports that different kinds of insects were being dispersed, and also established that the insects dropped were infected with plague, cholera and other epidemic diseases."[74]

Leitenberg and Weathersby offered no explanation for the differences between setting up only two false sites of infection, as the Soviet archival documents they present supposedly documented, while the IADL said they examined fifteen sites, not to mention citing the other areas of insect BW infestation in their report. The entire "false sites" allegation as presented in the Weathersby/Leitenberg documents describes a hoax that seems highly improbable of reasonable organization in the time allowed.

Oddly, since the March 3 date is stated explicitly in the IADL report, Milton Leitenberg has maintained in multiple essays, going back to 1998, and as late as 2016,[75] that the IADL entered North Korea on March 5, not March 3. (He has the date correct in a 1971 essay.[76]) That's either sloppiness, or possibly an attempt to fudge the

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[70] Weathersby, op. cit., 181.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, op. cit., 1.
[74] Ibid., 6.
[75] See Leitenberg, 1998, 186; Leitenberg, 2016, 4; and Milton Leitenberg, "False Allegations of U.S. Biological Weapons Use during the Korean War," Chapter 6, in Anne L. Clunan, Peter R. Lavoy, and Susan B. Martin, eds., *Terrorism, War, or Disease? Unraveling the Use of Biological Weapons,* Stanford University Press (May 2008), 6-5: https://cissm.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2019-07/leitenberg_biological_weapons_korea.pdf
[76] Milton Leitenberg, "Allegations of the Biological Warfare in China and Korea: 1951-1952," Appendix 4, vol. 5, *The Prevention of CBW,* Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm, and Humanities Press. 1971, 242: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/cbw_vol5.pdf.

dates in order to provide a few more days for the alleged Soviet-Chinese-North Korean conspiracy to be organized and carried out.

The switch to an April 1952 date for the Glukhov/Smirnov report is first mentioned in a May 17, 1953 memorandum from the Chairman of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Central Committee Party Control Commission, Shkiriatov, to G.M. Malenkov (Weathersby Document #10). "The note from Glukhov and Smirnov stayed with Ignatiev S.D. from 2 April until 3 November 1952," Shkiriatov declared.[77]

The April date amounted to a very different timeline for Ignatiev's suppression of the Glukhov/Smirnov report than Beria had reported less than a month earlier – if you believe or trust the provenance and/or truthfulness of the documents themselves.[78] According to the CPSU Control Commission, Ignatiev received the report on 2 April, and held it in his personal possession for seven months. The April date is repeated in the June 2, 1953 formal Control Commission decision condemning Ignatiev (Weathersby Document #12).[79]

Major inconsistencies

In the 22 years since these documents were made public, no one, neither Weathersby nor Leitenberg, nor their critics, nor any other commentator, has noted the discrepancy between the two dates surrounding the Glukhov/Smirnov report that supposedly exposed the germ warfare "hoax." Yet the difference between the dates is crucial, as one purported date (early March) is before and one after (early April) the three-week investigation by the IADL. The latter issued a "Report on U.S. Crimes in Korea" on March 31, 1952, and a separate "Report on the Use of Bacterial Weapons in Chinese Territory by the Armed Forces of the United States" on April 2, 1952.[80]

Of even more concern, when one reads their essays carefully, it appears that both Weathersby and Leitenberg went out of their way *not* to mention a discrepancy in dates surrounding the Glukhov/Smirnov report. While the failure to note the different dates could be chalked up to sloppiness or mere oversight, the fact is both Weathersby and Leitenberg (and the latter on multiple occasions) made a point of summarizing and commenting upon the Soviet documents without ever mentioning the issue of the differing dates. They appeared to do this by eliding information (or again, they were sloppy in their work, and their editors and subsequent readers negligent in analyzing the information.).

For example, in Kathryn Weathersby's 1998 article introducing the Soviet documents, which she translated, she referenced every single one of the twelve documents (marked in bold in the analytical portion of her essay) *except* Document #5,[81] where Beria claimed the report exposing the falsification of germ warfare sites was given to Soviet representative Ignatiev in early March (and then supposedly suppressed by him). She has had 22 years to correct her oversight, but has not done so. I e-mailed Ms. Weathersby in June 2021 asking her to clarify the situation for me, but I received no reply. Likewise, I e-mailed Mr.

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[77] Weathersby, op. cit., 183.

[78] Chaddock, op. cit., 345-347, found other inconsistencies in Weathersby's translated Soviet documents, notably the fact the supposed creation of the "two false sites" is said at one point to be before the IADL arrived in early March 1952 (Document #5), while another document from Glukhov (Document #2), stated the "two false areas of exposure" were created three to four months later, before the ISC delegation arrived in June 1952. Chaddock points out other errors as well, and agrees with this author that Beria's solicited evidence was part of a put-up charge against his rival, Igantiev. Oddly, Chaddock repeats Leitenberg's error that the IADL arrived in North Korea on March 5, probably a date he picked up from Leitenberg's own essays.

[79] Weathersby, op. cit., 184.

[80] See Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, *Report on U.S. Crimes in Korea*. March 31, 1952; and Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. *Report on the Use of Bacterial Weapons in Chinese Territory by the Armed Forces of the United States* (April 2, 1952): https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/606938/files/S_2684_Add.1-EN.pdf.

[81] Weathersby, op. cit., 182.

Leitenberg for his comments on the timeline and other issues. He refused to comment.

In the article, "New Russian Evidence on the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations: Background and Analysis," published jointly with Weathersby's essay, in contradistinction to Weathersby, Leitenberg *did* describe Beria's report as providing the March 1952 date for Gluckhov/Smirnov's memo to Ignatiev (though he didn't say it was in "early March"). But inexplicably, when it came time for him to describe Weathersby's Documents #10 and #12,[82] he failed to mention that these documents both described the later April date for Ignatiev's receipt of the memo, a date he would have known all too well came after the IADL had left Korea and had already published the results of their investigation.

More specifically, Document #10, a "Memorandum from the Chairman of the Party Control Commission of the CPSU CC Shkiriatov to G.M. Malenkov," dated May 17, 1953, stated that Ignatiev had possession of the Glukhov/Smirnov memo beginning on April 2, 1952. Document #12, which constituted the formal decision of the Party Control Commission on the matter, and which was dated June 2, 1953, also stated a little less specifically that Ignatiev had received the "false sites" report from the Soviet advisers "in April 1952."[83]

The COMINT reports belie allegations made in the alleged Soviet documents, and by Weatherby, Leitenberg and a host of subsequent historians that Soviet, Chinese, and North Korean propaganda concerning germ warfare ended by Spring 1953.

In his 18 April 1953 "explanatory note" to Beria, Razuvaev stated, "From January 1953 on, the publication of materials about the Americans' use of bacteriological weapons ceased in the DPRK. In February 1953 the Chinese again appealed to the Koreans regarding the question of unmasking the Americans in bacteriological war. The Koreans did not accept this proposal."

The Wu Zhili "memoir" (discussed further on) vaguely states that China, too, stopped mentioning the BW charges sometime in late 1952/early 1953. But the documentary record clearly shows that the Soviets, the DPRK, and China did *not* cease making assertions about U.S. use of germ warfare throughout the entire Korean War and for years afterward (though the Soviet Union did make some equivocal or contradictory statements over the following decades).

One example of North Korean propaganda concerning U.S. germ warfare, post-January 1953, is cited in a CIA intelligence report, "BW and the Korean War," dated 27 February 1953, and part of the *Baptism by Fire* CIA document release. This intelligence report described ongoing North Korean propaganda about the U.S. germ war continuing well into 1953. The report noted ongoing North Korean allegations of U.S. use of "poison gas and BW," accompanied by "a long compilation of alleged incidents to document each charge."[84]

U.S. news articles from that period also belie the claims that the USSR, North Korea, and China, stopped making germ warfare charges in early 1953. For instance, on March 23, 1953, the United Press news agency reported, "radio Peiping charged today that American planes made 60 germ warfare missions over North Korea between January and mid-March."[85] Additionally, Endicott and Hagerman[86] have described Soviet efforts to bring up the BW charges in the UN in October 1953.

Even more notable was China's November 1953 release of nineteen depositions by U.S. Air Force flyers, including that of Walker Mahurin, confessing to use of biological weapons in bombing runs during 1952-53. The confessions were

[82] Leitenberg, 1998, 196.
[83] Weathersby, op. cit., 184.
[84] Comint files, 150.
[85] United Press. "New Germ Charges," *The Honolulu Advertiser* (March 25, 1953), 2: https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-honolulu-advertiser/58037896/
[86] Endicott and Hagerman, 2001, 254.

published in English in a Supplement to *People's China* in December 1953.[87]

The confessions caused a huge stir in the West. On November 19, the CIA internally discussed the flyer confessions in a report by its Foreign Broadcast Information Service:

> Widespread broadcasting of the new confessions is being accompanied by vehement support propaganda which largely reviews past evidence, reiterates old accusations about the plans and purposes of the U.S. action, and asserts that these new revelations represent further irrefutable proof against current American denial…. Pyongyang also gave heavy play to the new confessions….[88]

A Questionable "Memoir"

In March 2016, in a Wilson Center CWIHP "Working Paper," Milton Leitenberg published an English translation and analysis of a "memoir" by Wu Zhili. Wu was identified as the Director of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army Health Division during the Korean War. According to the paper, Wu "describes the [Korean War BW] allegations as a 'false alarm' and reveals that there was no use of biological weapons by the Americans in the war. Although he does not go as far as to admit that the allegations were really active fraud and disinformation, much of his narrative makes that evident."[89]

Wu's paper itself is of dubious provenance, and Powell has claimed it to be a likely forgery, based in part on the fact the style of the "memoir" is so different from other of Wu's published works.[90] The memoir itself is also vague or wrong regarding dates. For instance, Wu attributes a cholera attack in Daidong (Dai-dong), North Korea, to "the day the [ISC] hearing began,"[91] which would identify the attack as on or around June 23, 1952. The ISC report dates the attack as May 16, 1952, and produces documentary evidence for that date.[92] Similarly, Wu described an incident when a family found fleas floating on a water jar near their house as also occurring at the time of the ISC hearing (late June 1952).[93] This incident is also described in the ISC report, which dates it back to mid-March.[94]

Sometimes Wu makes fantastical claims, as when he states he offered to infect himself with bacteria and thereby martyr himself in order to provide "proof" of biological warfare to international investigators. He presents the bacteriological work his unit did as central to the identification of bacteriological attack, when in fact there were a number of units and doctors and bacteriologists involved in both China and North Korea.

Wu implied that the Chinese and North Koreans had manufactured the "evidence" of bacteriological attack, specifically plague virus. He stated that after the ISC committee left China, and ISC Soviet committee member, Dr. Nikolai Zhukov-Verezhnikov, returned to the USSR and reported to Stalin (reported what, Wu doesn't say), "a telegram came from the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party saying that bacteriological warfare was a false alarm." The Chinese leadership then "ordered a retraction" of its anti-BW work, and subsequently "China did not raise the matter again, but following [generations] did not know."[95] As already shown, there is no

[87] "Depositions of Nineteen Captured U.S. Airmen on Their Participation in Germ Warfare in Korea," op. cit.
[88] "Far East Survey - Korea-Peking opens new BW barrage," FBIS Reports, *Baptism by Fire*, File 1953-11-19 (November 19, 1953), A-1: https://web.archive.org/web/20130713075309/http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/44/1953-11-19.pdf
[89] Leitenberg, 2016, 2.
[90] Powell, pp. 15-16.
[91] Leitenberg, op. cit., 70
[92] *Report of the International Scientific Commission for Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China* (ISC) (September 1952), 35, 429-446: https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/4334133/ISC-Full-Report-Pub-Copy.pdf
[93] Leitenberg, op. cit., 70-71.
[94] ISC, op. cit.., 287-316.
[95] Leitenberg, op. cit., 72.

evidence that Chinese officials ever ordered any retraction, and Chinese propaganda on the issue continued unabated.

Throughout his essay, Wu's timelines are confusing, when not simply impossible. As an example, Wu's mention of the CPSU CC telegram to China about the bacteriological "false alarm" can only be a reference to a supposed May 2, 1953 message to Mao Zedong (Weathersby Document #8) from the Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers, which said, "The spread in the press of information about the use by the Americans of bacteriological weapons in Korea was based on false information. The accusations against the Americans were fictitious".[96] But the May date doesn't fit Wu's narrative. He wrote that the Soviet telegram about the "false alarm" occurred *after* ISC panel member, Soviet scientist N. Zhukov-Verezhnikov, returned to the USSR.[97] A 2018 essay in *History of Medicine* has established from archival materials that Zhukov returned to the USSR on October 19, 1952.[98] Wu's timeline (or whoever wrote it in Wu's name) lies in tatters. If it were followed, it would mean that the CPSU CC telegram came in late October 1952 instead of May 1953. The effect is to produce nonsense.

Indeed, it is almost comical to see that in his 2016 "Working Paper," where Leitenberg introduced the Wu Zhili document, he also published a November 8, 1953 letter from Mao Zedong to North Korean Premier Kim Il Sung to the effect that China was going to begin a new propaganda push on the issue of the POW germ warfare confessions. How could Wu Zhili, who said China ended germ war propaganda in Spring 1953, have forgotten this major event? Or more to the point, how could Milton Leitenberg not see the blatant contradiction in the different sources of supposed evidence he was publishing? Wu wrote that "China did not raise the [BW] matter again" after it received the telegram from the Soviets about the "false alarm." Yet the November 8, 1953 letter from Mao shows this was not true. It's also worth asking why no historian or commenter has brought up this contradiction before?

There are many more errors of fact or misrepresentations in the Wu "memoir," as there are in the purported Soviet archival documents. But with the publication of the COMINT evidence of biological warfare attack on Chinese and North Korean military units, the Wu document now stands as a mere curiosity, one whose importance rests in the examination of false historical evidence.

Summary and Conclusion

As a lecturer at Oxford University, who was a skeptical friend of Hewlett Johnson, the Anglican Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, told Chinese officials in 1952, "It is not easy to convince those who do not believe the germ warfare allegations. You must have an adequate amount of evidence."[99]

With the discovery of the CIA COMINT documents, the controversy surrounding the legitimacy of the Chinese and North Korean claims of U.S. use of biological weapons would appear to have been settled. The COMINT reports join a number of other documentary sources, including hundreds of eyewitness reports gathered by both Communist and non-Communist investigators, the testimony of both Chinese and Western churchmen and missionaries, journalists, the signed depositions of twenty-five U.S. airmen testifying to participation in and knowledge of the

[96] Weathersby, op. cit., 183.
[97] Leitenberg, op. cit., 72.
[98] Viktoriya V. Romanova and Yaroslav A. Shulatov. "The echo of the Khabarovsk trials: The USSR and the allegation campaign against the USA of using biological warfare during the Korean war (1950–1953)." *History of Medicine*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (January 2018), 270: https://waseda.elsevierpure.com/en/publications/the-echo-of-the-khabarovsk-trials-the-ussr-and-the-allegation-cam
[99] Shiwei Chen (2009). "History of Three Mobilizations: A Reexamination of the Chinese Biological Warfare Allegations against the United States in the Korean War, *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Fall 2009), 219-220: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23613055

U.S. germ warfare campaign,[100] and the efforts of five different investigating committees[101] (two in China, one in the DPRK, and two drawn from mostly Western nations), in validating the Chinese and North Korean claims.

The evidence surrounding the U.S. use of biological weapons against DPRK and the PRC could fill a sizable bibliography. For evidence and testimony from churchmen and missionaries, see the writings of Dr. Rev. James Endicott[102] and Anglican churchman and Dean of Canterbury, Rev. Hewlett Johnson.[103]

The primary journalist eyewitness account of BW during the Korean War is that of Australian Wilfred Burchett.[104] An account of the controversy over Burchett's charges is given in Miller.[105]

With the addition of U.S. government documents showing Chinese and North Korean military units experiencing biological weapons attack, the amount of evidence backing Communist claims of U.S. use of germ warfare is well-nigh unassailable. While CIA analysts examining in real time Chinese and North Korean communications intelligence intercepts from Army and Air Force cryptologists were skeptical of the information they were receiving, one must consider that they probably were not "read into" any secret, covert program of germ warfare. These analysts either believed U.S. government and/or internal CIA denials about use of germ warfare, or their possible status as having been "read into" the covert BW campaign meant they could not make any mention of such knowledge in any other, even classified, setting.

Assuming the analysts were not read into the BW program, one must understand that the framework for their analyses was already provided by CIA, Pentagon and U.S. political leaders, who referred at the time to Communist statements about germ warfare as "hate America" propaganda. In any case, it stretches credulity to believe that a number of Communist military units made reports and undertook anti-

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[100] See Jeffrey S. Kaye, "Secret History: U.S. Air Force, Marine Corps Flyers' Confessions on Use of Biological Weapons in the Korean War," *Medium.com* (August 31, 2021): https://medium.com/@jeffkaye/secret-history-u-s-2ac4c7219bd; also "Depositions of Nineteen Captured U.S. Airmen on Their Participation in Germ Warfare in Korea," *People's China*, Supplement (December 1, 1953): https://www.massline.org/PeoplesChina/PC1953/PC1953-23-Sup-OCR-sm.pdf

[101] The five investigating committees were The Commission of the Medical Headquarters of the Korean People's Army on the Use of Bacteriological Weapons (January-February 1952); the Commission of Microbiologists, Entomologists, Parasitologists and Epidemiologists Working with the World Council of Peace (undated, but assumed in February 1952); the Commission for Investigating the Crimes of Bacteriological Warfare Committee by the U.S. Government (CIC-BWC), which was divided into a "Korea Group" and a "Northeast China Group" (February-April 1952); The Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, which issued two reports, one on North Korea on March 31, 1952, and one on China on April 2, 1952; and the International Scientific Commission for Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China (ISC) (July-September 1952). The first of the two reports above can be accessed at https://repository.aip.org/islandora/object/nbla%3A223231#page/28/mode/2up. The CIC-BWC report is at https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/23579081/1952-china-report-on-us_germ_warfare.pdf. The IADL reports are available at https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/606938/files/S_2684_Add.1-EN.pdf. The ISC report is available at https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4334133-ISC-Full-Report-Pub-Copy.html.

[102] James Endicott. "I Accuse," *Peace Review* (Summer 1952). Canadian Peace Congress: https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/4479198/James-Endicott-I-Accuse-Pamphlet.pdf

[103] Hewlett Johnson. "I Appeal." Britain-China Friendship Association, 1952 (exact date uncertain): https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/7216757/Hewlett-Johnson-s-Appeal-Re-BW-Korea.pdf

[104] Wilfred Burchett. *This Monstrous War*. Joseph Waters. 1953: http://ouleft.org/wp-content/uploads/KoreanWar.pdf

[105] Jamie Miller. "The Forgotten History War: Wilfred Burchett, Australia and the Cold War in the Asia Pacific," *Asia-Pacific Journal/Japan Focus*, Vol. 6. No. 9 (September 1, 2008): https://apjjf.org/-Jamie-Miller/2912/article.html

bacteriological measures as part of some grand "hoax," with the hope that somehow their otherwise normatively secret communications were overheard by the U.S. government and would be someday released and made public.

Much more could be said about the errors and contradictions inherent in the various documents produced by Katherine Weathersby and Milton Leitenberg and published by the U.S.-financed Wilson Center. This essay has given a number of reasons to hold such documents in critical abeyance, the product of either fraud or forgery by Stalinist authorities, and/or by others, including possibly Japanese or U.S. intelligence agencies.

Leitenberg has claimed that the twelve purported Soviet archival documents provide "detailed and authoritative evidence that the Korean War biological weapons allegations were contrived and fraudulent." (Leitenberg, 2000, p. 159) Detailed they are, but authoritative they are not. In the end, the Soviet documents, as well as the Wu Zhili "memoir", are unreliable as concerns dates, and are generally not corroborated by externally validated sources of documentation. They crucially differ in their conclusions as well.

The purported Soviet documents present a narrative wherein the Soviet leadership was duped by North Korean authorities, in league with Soviet advisers on site, into believing the U.S. was conducting germ warfare. Once they realized that wasn't the case, and that some Soviet advisers had participated in the "hoax," they punished the Soviet officials involved and called an end to propaganda on this issue, demanding the Chinese do so as well. For reasons unexplained, the North Koreans supposedly ended their propaganda about the germ warfare campaign sometime soon after the ISC report was released. None of this accurately reflects the historical record.

The Wu "memoir" also maintains there was no germ warfare, but instead of Soviet and North Korean collusion in constructing false evidence of such attack, it is strongly implied that the "hoax" was the work of Chinese and North Korean officials. These officials then lied to the Soviets about what was going on. When the game fell apart and the Soviets told the Chinese to forego any more propaganda on this issue, Wu claims they did. None of this is true.

One part of the Soviet documents do appear to be true. The Chinese explained to the Soviets that their understanding of the existence of a BW attack was due to reports from Chinese military in the field.[106] That one part would seem to be correct, and is consistent with the reports extant in the COMINT records, as well as a translation of one of those Chinese military reports produced by Endicott and Hagerman.[107]

This essay has not undertaken an analysis of the contributions or difficulties attendant therein of using the depositions or confessions of U.S. military personnel as documentary evidence of U.S. use of biological warfare. This is primarily because a consideration of that evidence would make this already lengthy essay extraordinarily long. However, it is worth asking that if these confessions were "false," and/or rendered under torture or other coercion, why did the Chinese not elicit statements connecting the U.S. BW campaign to Japan's BW personnel or facilities, given how important that connection was in their own

[106] See Leitenberg, 2016, Documents #2 and #3, 23-25. Both communications are from Mao Zedong. The first document alludes to a report by "Nie Rongzhen, Acting Chief of Staff of the People's Revolutionary Military Commission of the Central People's Government," which detailed reports of attacks by BW insect vectors coming from "frontline troops of the 20th, 26th, 39th , and 42nd armies." The second document is from Mao to Stalin, and elaborates on some of these "reports from the front."

[107] Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, "On Wuzhili's 'false alarm'" (June 1, 2016), 9-12: https://www.yorku.ca/sendicot/On%20WuZhili-false-alarm.pdf. This article included a reproduction of a translated partial report from Chinese archives, "'Concerning the Comprehensive Situation of the Enemy's Bacterial War and Use of Poisonous Gas, 28 January to 31 March 1952.' By the Headquarters of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army." The edited report describes the kinds of military intelligence from the field that Communist officials were receiving.

understanding of the germ war, and to their published propaganda on the issue? But when we consider that the U.S. Air Force and Marine personnel involved were likely unaware of the classified, secret agreement the U.S. had made with Japan's Unit 731, then the failure to make such a connection seems understandable, if it does not in and of itself add authenticity to the flyers' deposition-confessions.

It makes sense that the search for records documenting the BW campaign should concentrate on the CIA. According to historian Samuel F. Wells, who like Leitenberg and Weathersby is associated with The Wilson Center, the U.S. National Security Council "decided in October 1951 that the CIA would control all covert operations in Korea, but the military would provide the funds, equipment, and personnel for these operations under CIA direction."[108]

That is not to say that important documentation pertaining to the U.S. biological warfare campaign is not also to be found in U.S., Canadian and British military documents, or in other documentary sources, such as declassified FBI files.[109]

In one example, in a secret memo from J.C. Clunie, the Canadian Defence Research Board Senior Staff Officer for Special Weapons, wrote on December 27, 1951 to the Chief Superintendent at the biological and chemical weapons test site in Suffield, Alberta, "The USAF is giving serious consideration to the probable use of BW and CW Special Weapons."[110]

According to British historian Brian Balmer, in early 1952, David Henderson, Superintendent at the British primary BW research facility at Porton Down, "visited the US and, on his return, expressed concern to BRAB [UK's Biological Research Advisory Board] in March 1952 that 'American [BW] colleagues of long standing had become offensively minded,' wishing to end the Korean War as soon as possible…. BRAB members… expressed concern at the May meeting of the board that the US might use biological weapons in Korea."[111]

It also seems important to understand that major figures in the decision to amnesty the Unit 731 war criminals and utilize their BW expertise, specifically defense department officials Edward Wetter and Dr. Henry I. Stubblefield, were also key members of the U.S. BW project. Wetter was the Deputy Executive Director of Pentagon Research and Development Board's Biological Warfare Committee; Stubblefield, a Chemical Corps scientist at Camp Detrick, was a member of special "panel" that worked on BW for "crops." Wetter was also a member of the four-person "Secretariat" of the 1950, "Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical, Biological and Radiological Warfare," which recommended to the Secretary of Defense in June 1950 that "field tests of biological warfare agents and munitions be carried out as soon as possible."[112]

An important future direction for research on documenting U.S. use of BW in the Korean War lies in getting in currently censored portions of the COMINT documents unredacted, and obtaining release of documents not yet declassified. As it stands now, the released COMINT documents still contain an enormous amount of censored material. Author Nicolson Baker's recent book, *Baseless: My Search for Secrets in the Ruins of*

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[108] Samuel F. Wells, Jr., Robert S. Litwak, Donggil Kim, D. and Youngjun Kim. "Korean War: Myths and Misconceptions," *Wilson Quarterly* (Summer 2020): https://www.wilsonquarterly.com/quarterly/korea-70-years-on/korean-war-myths-and-misconceptions

[109] Jeffrey S. Kaye, "FBI Smoking Gun on U.S. Use of Biological Warfare in the Korean War." *Hidden Histories* (December 13, 2023): https://kayej.substack.com/p/fbi-smoking-gun-on-us-use-of-biological

[110] Jeffrey S. Kaye, "Canada used scientists to cover up US' Korean War biological weapons usage." *TheCanadaFiles.com* (November 8, 2023): https://www.thecanadafiles.com/articles/canada-used-scientists-to-cover-up-us-korean-war-biological-weapons-usage

[111] Brian Balmer. *Britain and Biological Warfare: Expert Advice and Science Policy, 1930-65*. Palgrave. 2001, 136.

[112] Jeffrey S. Kaye, "Updated: Key DoD Official Who Argued for Unit 731 Amnesty Figures at Inception of U.S. Germ Warfare Campaign in Korea", *Medium.com* (October 13, 2021): https://medium.com/@jeffkaye/key-dod-official-who-argued-for-unit-731-amnesty-figures-at-inception-of-u-s-78d90685897d

the Freedom of Information Act,[113] which also referenced a subset of the COMINT documents presented in this essay, also mentions a number of relevant documents that need declassification. His book ends with a call to declassify all the relevant material from the period of the Korean War.

The idea that the purported Soviet documents produced by Weathersby and Leitenberg in 1998 are authoritative refutations of the Korean War BW charges by China and North Korea has done a great deal of damage and distorted our understanding of a crucial event in U.S. history, and Asian history more generally. U.S. insistence that they never used biological weapons during the Korean War (or any war for that matter) remains a stumbling block in improving relations between the U.S. and its allies and China and North Korea.

The fact that a major war crime can be covered up for decades calls into question how those of us in the West make judgments on historical narratives, when it's quite clear that even large-scale historical activities can be hidden from public view for decades. The history of the U.S. amnesty of the Unit 731 biological warfare scientists, and the long-term censorship of the parameters of their work is one excellent example of such historical "blind spots."

It is hoped that this important revision of the history of the Korean War-era germ warfare charges, based on new documentary evidence, will begin the process of replacing ideologically-based historical accounts with a history grounded in facts.

[113] Nicholson Baker. *Baseless: My Search for Secrets in the Ruins of the Freedom of Information Act*. Penguin Books, 2020, 240-243, 249, 292.